

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1.-54. (Canceled).

55. (New) A method for suppressing the formation of precipitates to less than 0.1 ml per 10 ml during heat sterilization in producing a milk-added and heat-sterilized coffee beverage which comprises a coffee component in terms of solid portion from 1.08 to 10 w/v%, and a milk component in terms of solid portion from 1.48 to 10 w/v%, wherein;

the method comprises adding 0.005-0.5 w/v% of sodium hydroxide or a combination of sodium hydroxide and potassium hydroxide to a coffee component, in addition to from 0 to less than 0.14 w/v% sodium bicarbonate, and an emulsifier and a thickening agent in total of less than 1 w/v%;

adding a milk component to the coffee component; and

heat-sterilizing the mixture.

56. (New) A method according to claim 55, wherein the pH of the heat-sterilized beverage is 5.8 - 7.0.

57. (New) A method according to claim 55, wherein a combination of sodium hydroxide and potassium hydroxide is added.

58. (New) A method according to claim 55, wherein only sodium hydroxide is added.

59. (New) A method according to claim 55, wherein the sodium hydroxide or combination of sodium hydroxide and potassium hydroxide is added in an amount such that the pH of the beverage does not rise above 8.0 before the heat-sterilization.

60. (New) A method according to claim 55, wherein the milk component is cow's milk.

61. (New) A milk-added and heat-sterilized coffee beverage comprising from 1.08 to 10 w/v% of a coffee component in terms of solid portion, from 1.48 to 10 w/v% of a milk component in terms of solid portion, less than 1 w/v% in total amount of an emulsifier and thickening agent, from 0 to less than 0.14 w/v% of sodium bicarbonate, and 0.005-0.5 w/v% of at least one strongly basic substance selected from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide and a combination of sodium hydroxide and potassium hydroxide, wherein the amount of precipitates in the beverage formed due to heat-sterilization is less than 0.1 ml/10 ml.

62. (New) A beverage according to claim 61, wherein the strongly basic substance is a combination of sodium hydroxide and potassium hydroxide.

63. (New) A beverage according to claim 61, wherein the strongly basic substance is sodium hydroxide.

64. (New) A beverage according to claim 61, wherein the pH of the beverage after heat-sterilization is in a range between 5.8 and 7.0.

65. (New) A beverage according to claim 61, which further comprises one or more optional ingredients selected from sweet components, antioxidants and flavorings.

66. (New) A beverage according to claim 61, wherein the milk component is cow's milk.

67. (New) A beverage according to claim 61, which is packaged in a hermetically sealed container.